IS THEOSOPHY ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

BY

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Friends:—You will all know the occasion which has called forth this lecture. Most unfortunately, as some of us think, one of the leaders of the Church has declared that Theosophy is incompatible with Christianity. Now, it is the earnest belief of many of us that that statement is founded on a mistake, and that the mistake grows out of ignorance of the real meaning of Theosophy; for if Theosophy be what its name implies—the Divine Wisdom—it is clear that there can be no opposition between that and any religion which is true, which is founded on a real message to the world. Some of us feel sure that this statement on the Bishop's part is one which is calculated to do much harm—more to those whom he desires to help than those whom he thus assails; and my work here to-night is less to defend Theosophy as a school of thought than to show that there is nothing in it which is anti-Christian, and that for the sake of the ever-increasing number of clergy of the Church of England, as well as of the other Churches of Christendom, and of the ever-increasing number of the faithful laity of the Churches who are embracing the theosophical ideas, and who regard them as helpful and illuminating. For that ever-increasing number it is a painful, almost a terrible, thing that one of their Fathers in Christ should declare this belief, which they treasure, to be of anti-Christ, and it is largely for their sake that I speak here to-night, in order to relieve them, if I may, from a position which they find to be intensely grievous and painful, to justify their position in the Church, to show that it is neither just nor charitable that they should be driven out of the Church because they embrace Theosophy, and so show, if it may be, that in the teaching that is thus named there is everything that will make their Christianity stronger and more spiritual, and nothing that will make them renegades from the Church of their baptism.

Let me say at the very outset with regard to the message of Theosophy to the Christian Church, that it does not come directly and especially to those large numbers of Christian men and women who find within the doctrines of the Church, as commonly received, everything that their intellect demands, everything after which their souls hunger. Those who are utterly, those who are completely satisfied require no message which brings to them something more than they have, and the direct message of Theosophy is rather to those large numbers of Christian men and women whose hearts are stirred world was taking up the position of agnosticism. It was because the science of the day and the leading thought of Europe were taking up the position that man could *not* know God, and was not a spiritual being, that Those who are the Guardians of the spiritual evolution of the race re-proclaimed the ancient verity, the old-world Wisdom, that man by virtue of the Eternal Spirit within him was capable of the knowledge of God. That is the essence of Theosophy. All religion rests on that as on a basis that nothing can shake, on the experience of the human Spirit in contact with the Spirit whence it comes—man in the image of God capable of knowing his Father; man, an eternal Spirit, capable of that knowledge which is eternal life. And notice that the proclamation is that of the possibility of a present knowledge—not a knowledge of the future in some other world than this; not a knowledge to which death holds the key, and which can only be found in the regions on the other side of death; for that knowledge *is* eternal life, and not "shall be" eternal life in the to-morrow after death. It is eternal and not in time, and it rests on the eternity of the Spirit in man which is Divine. Surely, at least, then, in its essence, Theosophy is not anti-Christian; surely in this re-proclamation, Theosophy is only bringing to the helping of Christianity an ancient truth which had somewhat slipped out of sight.

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*An explanation addressed to the Bishop of London, delivered July 1, 1904.

Let us turn from that to the doctrines in which Theosophy and Christianity are alike. And here let me say that the claim of Theosophy is this: that it lies at the root of every world-faith, that it sums up those common spiritual verities which are the universal possessions of all the religions that have taught and consoled humanity. You know how, in modern days, Comparative Mythologists have declared that all religions spring from a single fount. They prove it by wide learning, and repeated experiment and investigation. They place side by side the Scriptures of the world; they unbury the remnants of ancient civilizations; they piece together the fragments of the broken tiles of Chaldea; they draw from the mummies of Egyptian tombs the pages of the *Book of the Dead;* they dig up from ancient temples in Mexico bits of the books that were taught when Atlantis flourished, when the world was young; and, placing all these side by side with modern literatures, they point out the identity of teaching, the identity of religious doctrines, the identity of morality, the identity of religious stories and religious ceremonies, and they say: "Lo! all the religions of the world are the same, and they grow from a single trunk." And from that undeniable truth they make the false deduction which is so often mixed up with the truth, and so gains credence, that all religions of the world being one, the man being an evolving creature, the religions of the world grow out of savage ignorance and are only gradually refined into the loftier faiths of the world—a deduction as false as the foundation of it is true, as utterly unprovable as the facts of the identity are undeniable.

Now, Theosophy declares that all religions most certainly do grow from a single trunk, but that trunk is Divine Wisdom and not human ignorance; that they are in truth identical in their main doctrines; although varying in the form in which those doctrines are presented; that every great religion that has civilized the world and elevated humanity comes forth from the Father of Lights, and is His revelation to man; and that the trunk is the Divine Wisdom of which all the religions of the world are branches, differing sometimes in flower and in the shape of their leaves, but all part of the one tree, the Divine Wisdom.

And now, as I pass on to the doctrines, permit me to say this as a word of warning: That it is the duty of the Theosophist to study these ancient doctrines and translate them as best he may into modern tongue. None has the right to say, "My interpretation only is the true one"; for in this matter every man is a steward of the Divine Mysteries, and must bring out as much of the riches as he can, and present them as part of the Truth to the world. But when we find that in every religion certain truths are found without exception, then I think we have the right to say that that which everywhere, in all times, and among all men has been believed, that is truly part of the Divine Wisdom.

We find, as standing first in the doctrines of all faiths, in the teachings of Theosophy, in the teachings of Christianity, the proclamation of the unity of God. There is one Supreme Life whence all lesser lives are flowing. It is true that in the mystical and philosophical schools of theosophical thought this is much spoken of, and behind the manifested God of whom religions tell, we dream of a vast incognisable Existence, made only possible to our knowledge because He manifests Himself so as to be known to men. But this is found in Christian theology as well as in Theosophy. The unity of God, the One Life, the One Spirit, the One Source and End of all beings, that is the foundation stone of Christianity, of Theosophy, and of all the great religions of the world. And next in order comes the declaration that this One, this Unique, Supreme Spirit, manifests Himself in triple form, a threefold Unity, a Trinity, as the Christian would say. Now in the theosophical teaching of the Trinity there is a difference of name, but no difference of fundamental truth. The Theosophist who goes to every religion of the world and expounds the fundamental unity of religious beliefs cannot confine himself in his teaching to the single names belonging to a single faith; for it is his object to show to the men of every faith that they are sharers in the revelation of the Divine Wisdom. Hence, in speaking of the Trinity, we have preferred to use an ancient Greek term —sanctioned, I may remark, by the Fourth Gospel—used in the philosophy of Greece, used in other philosophies as well, as the name which best reveals the nature of the manifested God—the Greek term of the Logos, translated in the Fourth Gospel as the "Word," "and the Word was God." In Theosophy we use that term Logos in preference to the names of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and we speak of the three Logoi, but describe each in terms which prove the identity of the theosophical conception with that which is put forth by Christian theologians. The First, who appears as the Will, the root of being; the Second, who manifests as the Divine Wisdom, which is knowledge inspired by love; and the Third, who manifests as the Creative Activity, the Creative Spirit, immanent in all matter, immanent in all forms.

Pass from the doctrine of the Trinity to the next which naturally presents itself: the vast hosts of ministering spirits, the archangels and the angels of the Christian faith. These also are asserted in Theosophy as the vast hierarchies of spiritual intelligences who guide the course of nature, who administer the laws of nature which are the expression of the Divine Will, those elder Sons of God, products of worlds other than our own, guiding our younger world along the lines traced out for it by its Divine Ruler. It is true that with regard to these vast heirarchies of spiritual intelligences Theosophy gives more of detail than you will find in Christianity as now taught; but if we may trust the writings of the Christian Fathers, of the great bishops and doctors of the Church, they knew far more of the details of that angelic ministry than is common now among the beliefs of modern Christians, and in this Theosophy is rather bringing back the older knowledge than really adding anything to the Christian faith.

We regard those mighty archangels and angels as the product of evolution of older worlds than this, as those who have won beyond the point towards which we now are climbing, truly, as they are called in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Sons of God, who surrounded this world in its earliest beginnings, and who shouted with joy as the splendor of the plan unfolded itself, and bowed in homage before the wonders of the Divine Wisdom. To us, that ministry of angels, far off and near, is a fact of daily life and of reiterated experience, and there, as in many things, the Roman Church has held more closely to the ancient truth than have the Protestant communities, inasmuch as it has ever asserted the keen and living interest of these elder Brothers with Their younger brothers who are treading the Path that They have trod so long ago in the days of their struggle, ere their victory was won.

Pass from that, still identity of doctrine, to the teaching as to the nature of the human Spirit. Now, Theosophy declares that the human Spirit in its innermost nature is one with God. But does that go beyond the magnificent words of the Christ, praying His last prayer before His agony, speaking of His disciples around Him? "That they all may be one: as Thou Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us." The same unity that He asserted as between Himself and the Eternal Father was the unity that He claimed for the disciples of His love, and nothing less than that perfect unity will be the satisfaction of the truly Christian heart who dreams of the day when he shall be perfect as God is perfect—when even the Son shall render all things up to the Father, and God shall be all in all. So that, surely, in that assertion also Theosophy and Christianity are at one in this inner Divinity in man, with all the hopes that it gives to humanity, with all the certainty of a final achievement for all.

Pass from these, in which we are truly at one, and let us come to the doctrines which I said apparently differed in Theosophy and Christianity; for here is the crux of our argument. Let us take first a great Christian doctrine, which is one on which the Theosophist is often challenged—the doctrine called that of the Atonement. Now, if the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is to be limited to only one of the various doctrines current in the Christian Church, and made identical with that legal presentation which was crystallised, I think I may say, by Anselm, and was unknown to earlier Christianity; if it is to be made a legal contract; if it is to be made a substitution, in the legal sense, of Christ for the sinner, then I am bound to confess that Theosophy and Christianity on this would differ. But has that legal presentment of the Atonement any right to claim for itself alone the unique title of Christian? Surely, it is not so. For going back into Christian antiquity, what do I read of as the earliest doctrine of Atonement in the Christian Church? You must remember that in the Scriptures of Christianity the Atonement is put in a somewhat vague and mystical way by suggestions, by hints of a spiritual truth, and not by a legal definition; and that is also largely true of the statements found about it in Christian antiquity. But one statement comes out strongly and clearly in the oldest writings of the Fathers of the Church, and that is the statement, so little thought of as possible to-day, that the Atonement was not a sacrifice offered to God, but the payment of the price of humanity in redeeming man from the bondage of the devil. That was the view taken, that you can read for yourself, if you will study, as you should study, that most valuable library of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, which gives you the early teachings of the great Doctors of the Church in most illuminative fashion. And there you will find this stated over and over again, that the Atonement is the redemption of humanity from the power of darkness, from the bondage of the Evil One. But I do not want to rest the case of differences of exposition on those ancient teachings of the Christian Church.

Come down to our day. Take the wonderfully beautiful and spiritually intuitive book of Dr. Macleod Campbell on the Atonement. His declaration of the meaning of the Atonement, one of the most beautiful I know, is that it was intended to show to man the heart of God, and to show to God the possibilities of man. Now there is a view worked out with much learning, with much intuition, with much beauty of language and clearness of thought, and the whole of the Theory of the Atonement is expressed in that phrase: "The revelation of God to man, and of man to God." Leave Macleod

Campbell on one side, though I think his book has not seriously been challenged us unorthodox, and take the exposition of men like Frederick Denison Maurice, such men as Robertson of Brighton, such men as all the "broad church," as they are called, of the Church of England, and you will find that in every case a view is put forward of the Atonement which does not regard it as a mere substitutionary sacrifice, but rather as a means whereby man is drawn near to God, whereby the Christ, in His quality of Divine Man, forms a bridge by which the twain are made one. And among all those varying doctrines of Atonement which now are found in the Christian Church, among those varieties of belief all of which are Christian, and none of which has been condemned and excluded, among those certainly the exposition from the theosophical point of view may fairly take its place, and claim to be no more anti-Christian than those generally received doctrines of the most liberal minded section of the Church of England.

For what is the doctrine of Atonement as seen from the theosophical standpoint? It is the declaration that the Atonement wrought by Christ lies not in the substitution of one individual for another, but in the identity of nature between the divine man and men who are becomming divine; that just because Christ is divine, therefore by identity of nature can He pour His strength and His helping into His brethren who are also divine, although not yet attaining to His stature; that all that is seen in Christ is verily all that man shall become; that the Atonement of the Christ does not lie in His taking the place of the sinner, but in His being born into the soul of man —as Paul His apostle prayed that He might be born within the souls of his converts—and that when the Christ is thus born into the human soul and grows and develops and matures until that soul reaches the stature of the fulness of the Christ, that then the Atonement is wrought, and man is made divine, he who was ever divine in essence, and is seen as palpably divine when his union with the Christ is accomplished.

This word "the Christ" means to us more than the name of one, however lofty, or however holy, and to us the Christ is less an external Saviour than a living Presence in the human Spirit, a Presence by which the human Spirit unfolds its innate divinity, so that in time all men become Christs. It is this divine aspect of the human Spirit to which we most readily give the name of Christ; and while we certainly yield it with all reverence and honour to that great and divine Teacher who laid the foundations of the Christian Church, we yet regard Him as His own apostle named Him, as One among many brethren, raising men by the likeness of His death and resurrection into the living and self-conscious sons of God. That is the mystic truth which lies under the doctrine of the historical Christ; that not only in that beloved Son of the Father is the Christ life manifested, but that in all men step by step that life is wrought out, and that likeness appears; that the Christ Spirit in man is that whose growth is typified in the outer life of that great Son of God, and that the story in the Gospels is not only the history of a man—though that in truth it is—but is also the ever-renewing history of every human soul that climbs out of darkness into light, out of death into immortality, out of sin into righteousness, and out of man into God.

Surely such an inspiring enlargement of the doctrine, taught, you must remember, by many a pregnant hint in the epistles of the canonical New Testament, repeated over and over again by mystic writers in the Church, surely that it is not to be called anti-Christian. Surely it makes possible belief in the Atonement to many who would be otherwise repelled, and it is the result of the natural growth of human thought and human morality, which does not see the worst of sin in the penalty which is said to follow it, but in the fact of the polluting sinfulness, without saving from which no true Atonement can be wrought.

But pass from that doctrine of Atonement to the doctrine of Prayer. "Do you Theosophists ever pray?" is a very continual question. Now, in this matter of prayer, what I may call the analysing tendency of Theosophy comes out very strongly; and more and more as the Theosophist grows and understands does he shrink from the forms of prayer which are simply supplications for temporal advantages, and more and more does he embrace those loftier types of prayer, which are either ecstatic contemplation of the divine Beauty and Perfection, or meditation, aspiration, the yearning after the knowledge of God, which is the truest and most effective prayer. We do not deny that temporal blessings may be gained by prayer. On the contrary, we affirm it. Only do we say that those prayers for temporal blessings are worked out by inferior agents of the divine Will rather than come as the direct answer from God to man; that is to say, that they are rather mediate than immediate. And though it be true that every pulse of man's heart finds its answer in the eternal heart of God, yet it is the divine way to work by agents rather than directly, and to make the direct working the communion of Spirit with Spirit rather than the dealing with the lower material and grosser things. So that we should say that the prayer for some material aid or material wealth would be answered rather by an angel than directly by a divine command; and that those countless hosts of beneficent beings who surround us at every moment of our lives are continually the agents whereby the prayer of the sorrowful and distressed is answered; that it is they who are the bringers of the help, they who are the workers, the bestowers of the boon.

But I do not know that that kind of analysis need do anything to make men undervalue prayer, although it is true that we say that it is higher, nobler, more filial in our attitude towards the Supreme to trust to Him who knows all, and without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, the care of our material wants, to Him who knows so much better than we know what is truly best; to leave that to Him who knows all and who loves all, and to turn our efforts in prayer rather towards raising ourselves to Him in spiritual communion, in spiritual endeavour, than waste those precious moments in the mere cravings after material good. For the child who trusts the father is not always telling the father what he ought to do for the child, and it is true that He knows better than we do what is good for the growth of the Spirit within. So even though it come by bodily bereavement and by bodily hardship, better is it to accept that which seems evil from the divine hand, than to thrust it back and claim what appears to us to be good; for often that which is sorrowful is but a veiled blessing, and by demanding in our blindness the boon we crave we may do less of good to the inner life than by living in calm trust in the rule of the Governor of the world. And it seems to me that this is one of the lessons which is taught in that great story, whether you regard it as a myth (that is, as a presentment of a deep spiritual truth) or whether you regard it as a fact in the history of a man, I mean the temptation of the Christ. Although He could have slaked His hunger and thirst by turning stone into bread, and making water stream up in the desert, He thought it more worthy the position of a son to wait until the divine messengers brought Him the food that His body needed, than to turn the stones into bread by the exercise of occult power—and all prayer is truly exercise of occult power and of occult will. That is our position, then, as regards prayer. We know it to be effective; we should not say to any one: "You should not ask for that;" but where we see the intelligence growing, and the heart taking on a more filial attitude, we do usually say: "Make your prayer an effort towards communion with the Supreme rather than the craving for earthly benefits and the more you strive to spiritualize your prayer, the more useful will you find it as subserving spiritual growth."

Let me pass from that to a question that I know comes very near to the hearts of all Christians. Does the Theosophist recognize Christ as the divine Teacher? Does he yield Him the dignity which the Christian gives to Him? And does the Theosophist regard Christianity as a unique revelation?"

Now, on that point I desire to speak as clearly as I can. In all the religions of the world, we find that the Second Person in the Trinity believed in, shows out this peculiar characteristic of becoming incarnate or revealed to men as man. That is not peculiar to Christianity; you find it in every great religion of the world; therefore, from our standpoint, there is indicated therein a profound spiritual truth. As Theosophists, we should not say that Christ is unique, if you apply the name exclusively to one divine Man; but if you apply the name of Christ to the Second Logos, the Second Person of the Trinity, then no adoration that you pay Him can be too lofty nor too reverent. Only I am bound in honour and in honesty to say to you that I should say exactly the same to the Hindu in his worship of his presentation of that same Second Logos, whom he calls Vishnu; and I should tell him, as I tell you, that in every religion worship is paid to the same Being, though a different name is used. So that, while the Christian does rightly in using his own name for the object of that supreme worship, he ought not to deny the worship offered in other religions to the same great Logos under a name other than the name of Christ.

That is the first point; the second point, taking the Christ from the other side, as Man rather than as the Second Person in the Trinity, we reverence Him as the divine Teacher; we reverence Him as the founder of Christianity, and therefore as the One to whom the Christian soul should turn as Master, as Guide, as Lord. Emphatically we say of Him that He is the Master to whom the Christian soul should turn. But we also say—and here again comes in our addition—that there are other divine Teachers in other faiths, and that They occupy to the millions of souls who worship Them the same position of Divine-human Teachers, as the great Master Jesus holds in the Christian Church. So that while a Christian who is a Theosophist would rightly and truly turn to the Christ, or to the great Master Jesus, as he turned before he was a Theosophist, there would be this which would be likely to be in his mind: that others in other religions find the same help and the same guidance in other divine Teachers, and that he must not outrage their belief by denying their prophets, any more than they should outrage his by denying the divine Prophet at whose feet he bows.

There is the point where the difference might be most keenly felt; but it need not affect the Christian who does not accept that view that the non-Christian Theosophist would hold; for it is only that he narrows the meaning, and inasmuch as within the limits of the Theosophical Society there is no creed to which assent is demanded, he may, if he will, proclaim the uniqueness of his own Teacher—and truly to every soul of man his own Teacher is unique. None the less do I think the Christian will do well, in view of the hundreds of millions of human souls who are children of God as much as he is, and who crave a Divine Revelation as much as he can do, rather to thank the Supreme Father that He has manifested Himself in many ways and through divers prophets, and not to claim for himself an exclusive privilege, or declare that all should yield reverence to his Teacher. But if you use the word "Christ" as I should use it, as the symbolic name by which all divine Teachers are to be named when They have reached the unity of the Father and know Themselves as the manifested Sons of God; ah! then you may bow to all those great Beings under the name of Christ, only remembering that in truth They are many, and that God has shown Himself in many ways.

And so with Christianity. We, looking at it among the religions of the world, cannot say that it is a unique revelation and stands alone as a way to God. On the contrary, we affirm that every faith through which a man's heart seeks for God shall surely lead to the finding of Him; that there is but one God, after whom all hearts are yearning, one spiritual Centre to which turns the heart of every child of man; and no matter where a man is in the circumference of religions, there is but one Centre to which his face is turned, and although the roads be many the Goal is one, and all hearts that love Him shall find their rest in the same God at last. If that belief, all-inclusive as it is, is to be called anti-Christian, then I suppose that part of Theosophy would on this point be so branded. I think not that it will be so; for I see on every side a widening belief and a larger hope for man; and I remember that the late Archbishop of Canterbury, in speaking at a missionary meeting to those who were going out as missionaries among the different religions of the world, bade those missionaries treat every religion with reverence and respect, for they also were revelations although he thought them more partial than the Christian revelation. That is right and fair enough from a Christian Archbishop; for to every man should his own religion be the best and the dearest, to every man should his own faith be the most satisfying and the most sublime. All that Theosophy asks is that spirit of reverence for the faiths of others that Christians claim for themselves; so that in this vast empire of Britain, where there are men of every faith, and more men of other faiths under the Imperial sceptre than the Christians themselves can number, there shall be the recognition of a common unity as well as a common policy, and that humanity shall be recognised as one essentially in faith, however much they may differ in the outward garb.

I pass, then, from that point to the one I said I would mention, of the supposed addition that we make in the teaching of re-incarnation. Now on that point I only ask you to study to begin with. You will find, as you study the writings of the Jews, that the teaching of re-incarnation is common there. You will find it in the Kabalah, and you will see, if you choose to read some of the latest translations of that, that the doctrine of the re-incarnation of souls is taught among the Jews; and you cannot ignore the relation between Judaism and Christianity. Nor can you fail to admit the light thrown by Jewish teaching on the early days of Christian belief.

From that, pass to the writings of the early Bishops of the Church, and you will find one after another teaching the pre-existence of the soul. Pass again from that (for it is a question for your study) to the question which is most important to us, and most interesting to me, because of this book which bears the approval of the Bishop of London upon it. In this book the doctrine of evolution for man is taught. You may say: "What of that? everyone believes in evolution now-a-days." But thirty or forty years ago the doctrine of evolution was anti-Christian, and every Christian pulpit rang with denunciation against Darwin and his followers. But it is not for that that I draw your attention to this point; it is for a far graver question. What do you mean when you say that you believe in evolution? *What* is it evolves? only the bodies? But that means materialism; because if you are going to accept evolution, and say it is only an evolution of the bodies, then it must be from the greater perfection of those bodies that the greater intelligence of man comes *as a product;* and that is a very awkward position for any one holding the Christian faith to take up. How are you to deal with it? *What* evolves? Do you say the fathers hand down better bodies to the children? Well, but even if you say that, and ignore the later scientific teaching that no acquired qualities are transmitted, how shall you deal with this difficulty, which does not seem much to have struck people in discussing evolution by means of form: that for the most part children are born of the younger, not of the older, so that when men have acquired their noblest qualities and are growing old, that is the very time when they cannot transmit those qualities; for the child is born in the youth of the parents rather than in extreme age, so that you would have the undeveloped, inchoate, uncompleted people as the parents for handing on the bodies, while the better evolved, the nobler, the wiser, the more thoroughly developed, having passed beyond parentage, can take no part in evolution—a very awkward difficulty to find yourself in.

But I want to go a step further than that. I ask you again: "*What* evolves? Do you really, seriously, think that only the bodies evolve, and that then God creates improved human souls to suit the improved forms? That is a very curious view of the creative power of God. And yet you cannot escape it; for if evolution is to be confined to the evolution of forms, then God must wait upon that evolution to produce ever nobler and ever nobler souls to put into the more highly evolved forms; and you find yourselves in the most difficult of positions, for God is, as it were, improving in His creation of souls in order to match the improved evolution of the forms. It is impossible. when once we think of it. The fact is, that the scientific doctrine of the evolution of form demands for its completion—unless we be materialists—the ancient and universal doctrine of the evolution of a continuing soul side by side with the evolving forms. Then you have a complete whole, then you see the beauty of the Divine plan, which on one side evolves the bodies, and on the other unfolds the Spirits that ensoul the forms; and the double line of evolution, the immortal Spirit unfolding, and the physical form improving, gives you a scientific and complete picture in which your intellect can rest with utmost satisfaction.

But then there is a difficulty raised by the Bishop, and it seems to me a very strange one. Addressing a fairly cultured audience, he spoke against re-incarnation, on the strange ground that, if it were true, those to whom he was speaking, respectable citizens, had ages ago been criminals. True. But why not? Would it not be much more unjust if you, respectable and cultured citizens, came to be what you are without struggle or effort of your own, and that those unfortunate criminals were plunged without any fault of theirs into the mire in which they are wrestling. Surely that would be a terrible injustice. But for some reason I do not understand, I never found a person complaining of divine injustice because he has so much more than he deserves. And yet that seems to me quite as strikingly unjust as any one having less than he deserved. Because, after all, justice is justice, and what have *you* done, unless you lived in lives before the present one, to earn the position of advantage in which you are placed today?

That is the question before which men's hearts and intelligences will shrink, until they accept the great doctrine of re-incarnation. For think what it means with regard to those "criminals in the slums of Whitechapel." How could I go to them and say to them: "You are God-created, and I here, far above you, am also God-created?" My lips would falter; my heart would break, at speaking thus to the miserable criminal in the slums. But if I can go to him and say: "My brother, I, whom you look on as cultured and enlightened, was in the past exactly what you are to-day; I, too, was savage and criminal; I, too, was profligate and drunken; but I have climbed from that place where once I was grovelling to the higher plane on which I stand today. And you, my brother, will climb as I have climbed; you are no worse than I was; I am no better than you will be. Nay! my brother, there is something greater before us both than we know, heights that I have not climbed, but that we both shall climb hereafter. For you are as divine as I; the Spirit of God is as truly in you as in me; and by the divine law, you shall grow to heights unimaginable now, and you shall become what saints and heroes have been, nay! shall grow to the very perfection of God Himself." Would not that be a more hopeful message for the Prince of the Church to carry into the slums, than to tell the dwellers therein that they are God-created criminals while others, the speakers, are God-created clergy and Bishops of the Church?

Is, then, Theosophy anti-Christian? Or is it not rather a new inspiration, and a new strength for Christianity? I said that if I could I would finish what I had to say, showing it was not anti-Christian, by a word or two on the message it brings to the Churches, and the hope it unfolds to them for the days to come. For there are difficulties and dangers and obstacles in the way of the Churches here, and antiquarian researches undermining them there; the Higher Criticism is digging at their foundations on one side, and men are challenging them from the standpoint of antiquity, and showing the doubtfulness of the uniqueness of their teachings on the other. But you must not build the Church of Christ on antiquarian research, nor on the Higher Criticism, nor on any question of the value of a manuscript; you must build Christ's Church on the living Christ, and not on the dead manuscripts, otherwise your Church will crumble before the assaults of scholars and antiquarians. You should not live in continual fear lest one man should take away from you this doctrine, and another man that, lest this scholar should deprive you of one belief, and another scholar of another. Nay, those things may have their place and use; and the greatest use of criticism seems to me to be not that it establishes the facts of history, because these facts of history are not very important things, but that it drives the devout heart back to its own experience, on the living experience of a living Christ, which is the basis of all true religion. For religion is not based on mouldy manuscripts, nor on worm-eaten books; it does not find its sanction in the authority of Councils, nor in the statements of tradition. It comes from human experience, from the evolving relation of the human soul with God. And Christ is driving His Church back upon that, because it has been built on the shifting sand of history instead of on the rock of human experience. There, it seems to me, is the use that we Theosophists may possibly be to the Church: not to teach you what you have not, but to point out some truths that have been forgotten; not to bring you fresh jewels, for you have them, but perchance to wipe something of the dust of centuries from off them, and show you how brightly and purely they beam. For we have learned from ancient Scripture a fact, which is as much Christian as it is of any other faith, that man, as I said at the beginning, can know God, and that the disciple can know his Master, as surely, as really, as certainly, as they who wandered along the shores of Galilee knew their Master Christ. God is not partial, and He does not give to one age of the world spiritual opportunities denied to another, and the value of Theosophy to the Churches seems to me to be this: that we declare that the Christ can be known now as much as He could be known in the elder days; that the disciple may find Him, may talk with Him face to face to-day as He was met in Judea in the elder time; that man's Spirit is not weaker now than in the days of the apostles; that man's Spirit is strong, and living, and free, as it was in the days when angels talked with men; and that it is only our want of faith, our want of courage, our clinging to the treasures of the world that perish, it is these things that are obstacles in the Path of Knowledge, and these obstacles it is in our power to remove. Therefore we bring it to you as our testimony, as witnesses of the reality of the unseen world, that man may know it now as he knew it in the elder days; that we also are children of God and can know God's world, not only the fragment of the physical, but the worlds beyond death, and the heavenly world as well.

That is our message, that our work: to bring back the old methods which taught men to be free of the body; and to re-give to the modern world the science of the soul, which tore away the veil between the disciple and the Master, and made the invisible worlds familiar as the visible is now. We bear witness that man is still a living Spirit, is still an immortal soul; and that man, if he will, may leave the prison of the body, may unlock this prison-house whilst still the flesh is about him, may learn the secrets of the other worlds, may meet the Master and bow at His blessed feet. And if Thosophy can bring that knowledge again back into Christianity, then you will know of a truth that it is not anti-Christian; for it puts religion on the rock of experience, and thus places it beyond the storms which threaten it from research and from scholarship to-day.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

Motto—"There is no Religion higher than Truth."

OBJECTS.

To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color.

To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science.

To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the above objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of good-will whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow, but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the *Divine Wisdom*, and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway of a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the science of the spirit, teaching man to know the spirit as himself, and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and Theosophists endeavour to live them. Every one willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true Theosophist.

Any person desiring information as to the Theosophical Society is invited to communicate with the General Secretary, Dr. Weller Van Hook, 31 N. State St., **Chicago.**

A SYSTEMATIC COURSE OF READING IN THEOSOPHY.

It is suggested that beginnegs read first the following elementary works:

A Primer of Theosophy	$0.15
Popular Lectures on Theosophy, by Annie Besant, paper 25 cents, cloth	.50
An Outline of Theosophy, by C. W. Leadbeater	.25
Theosophical Manuals:	
Man and his Bodies, by Annie Besant	.35
Reincarnation by Annie Besant	.35
Karma, by Annie Besant	.35
Some Glimpses of Occultism, by C. W. Leadbeater	1.50
In the Outer Court, by Annie Besant	.75
Invisible Helpers, by C. W. Leadbeater	.50
Theosophy and The New Psychology, by Annie Besant	.75
The Other Side of Death, by C. W. Leadbeater	1.50
The Voice of the Silence, by H. P. Blavatsky, paper 15 cents, cloth 50 cents, leather	.75
Thought Power—Its Control and Culture, by Annie Besant	.75
Chicago Convention Lectures, by Annie Besant	.75
The Changing World, by Annie Besant	1.00

After the preliminary reading, as outlined above, the following more advanced works are recommended:

The Ancient Wisdom, An Outline of Theosophical Teachings, by Annie Besant	$1.50
The Growth of the Soul, by A. P. Sinnett	1.50
Theosophical Manuals:	
The Astral Plane, by C. W. Leadbeater	.35
The Devachanic Plane, by C. W. Leadbeater	.35
Esoteric Christianity, by Annie Besant	1.50
A Study in Consciousness, by Annie Besant	1.50
The Pedigree of Man, by Annie Besant	.75
The Christian Creed, by C. W. Leadbeater	1.25
Man Visible and Invisible (illustrated), by C. W. Leadbeater	2.50
Thought Forms (illustrated), by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater	3.50
Light on the Path, by Mabel Collins, without comments, paper 15 cents, cloth	.25
The Bhagavad Gita (translated from the Sanskrit),by Annie Besant, paper 20 cents, cloth 50 cents, leather	.75

Inquiries about the Theosophical Society and requests for free sample copies of the American Section's magazine, *"The Theosophic Messencer,"* and for general theosophic literature for free distribution, should be sent to the General Secretary, American Section Theosophical Society, 31 N. State Street, Chicago, Illinois.

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